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International migration and development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/203 of 21 February 2002, the present report summarizes activities relating to international migration and development that have been carried out by relevant organizations within and outside the United Nations system, taking into account the lessons learned as well as best practices on migration management and policies. The report also discusses the actual and potential mechanisms within the United Nations system to address the issues related to international migration and development, including the possibility of the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development.

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I. Introduction

1. The United Nations estimates that the total number of international migrants in the world stood at 175 million in 2000, up from 154 million in 1990. While international migrants constitute only 3 per cent of the world population, the debate over the cross-national movements of people continues with little sign of abating. Continued political instability and violations of human rights in some parts of the world have led to the forced movements of people, often on a large scale. Widening disparities in income and opportunities among countries add to the pressures for people to move. Technological transformations and economic globalization in particular have generated new demands for skills and labour in many parts of the world, demands that are often satisfied by migrant workers. As a result, a growing number of countries are involved in international migration, whether as countries of origin, transit or destination for migrants. The challenges posed by today's cross-border movement of people call for international cooperation and coordinated responses.

2. Population movements are closely related to a variety of socio-economic, demographic and political dimensions. Both among policy makers and researchers the need to understand better the intricate linkages between international migration and development has been growing. Recent debates on migration issues have focused on the role of international migration in relation to free trade and international financial flows. It is clear that modern modes of communication have facilitated the creation and maintenance of transnational networks of people that promote the transfer of knowledge and technology across borders. Reductions in the cost of transportation have not only helped to fuel international migration but have also permitted more frequent trips to the country of origin, thus strengthening ties between migrants and their communities of origin and providing incentives for the participation of migrants in the development of those communities. In addition, migrant remittances continue to provide an additional income to the families and households left behind. At the macro level, migrant remittances have grown, often exceeding the amount of official development assistance. These developments underscore the need to re-examine the linkages between international migration and development so as to devise ways of ensuring that international migration contributes to the economic and social development of the countries involved.

3. The General Assembly, in its resolution 56/203 of 21 February 2002, requested the Secretary-General to submit at its fifty-eighth session a report on international migration and development which would update the lessons learned, as well as best practices on migration management and policies, from the various activities relating to international migration and development that have been carried out at the regional and interregional levels, and submit action-oriented recommendations for the consideration of the Assembly. The same resolution also requested the Secretary-General to solicit, one additional time, the views of Member States on the possibility of convening a United Nations conference on international migration and development. The present report is prepared in response to those requests, and in consultation with relevant bodies, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental, regional and subregional organizations active in the field of international migration and development.

II. Recent work of the relevant organizations within and outside the United Nations system in the field of international migration and development

A. United Nations Secretariat

1. Department of Economic and Social Affairs

4. Several offices of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) carry out activities related to international migration and development. The Population Division has been responsible for monitoring levels and trends of international migration as well as international migration policies. It has also carried out studies to investigate the interrelations between international migration and socio-economic and political changes in selected regions. Since 2001 the Division has issued two publications focusing on particular regions: *International Migration from Countries with Economies in Transition, 1980-1999*[1] and *Levels and Trends of International Migration to Selected Countries in Asia*.[2] In addition, in 2003, the Population Division published the *International Migration Report, 2002*,[3] presenting new estimates of the stocks of international migrants at the country level, estimates of net migration, and the views of Governments regarding levels of immigration and emigration. The information compiled in this report provides an objective basis for a comparative assessment of international migration trends and policies worldwide.

5. The Population Division attaches particular importance to strengthening partnerships with international and intergovernmental bodies involved in international migration activities, within and outside the United Nations system. In response to General Assembly resolution 56/203, which called upon all relevant organizations to continue to address the issue of international migration and development, the Division organized the first Coordination Meeting on International Migration in July 2002. The Meeting brought together representatives from over 20 organizations to discuss issues related to the collection and exchange of information on international migration. A key conclusion reached was that coordinating activities was important to avoid duplication of efforts. The Meeting also underscored the need to strengthen efforts to standardize international migration information and statistics so as to improve the cross-national comparability of information. However, it was recognized that the required information on international migration could be generated only with the appropriate national capacity, and that it was, therefore, necessary to increase technical and financial assistance for capacity-building.

6. The Statistics Division continues to collect statistics on international migration from national statistical offices for publication in the *Demographic Yearbook*. In 1998, the Division issued *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*,[4] which provides guidelines for the compilation of international migration statistics. These recommendations have been disseminated widely among those in charge of international migration statistics, as well as through relevant workshops and meetings. Most recently, the Statistics Division organized a side-meeting on the *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration* during the joint United Nations Economic Commission for Europe-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics held in Geneva in April 2003. The Division is planning an interregional workshop on the same subject for the second half of 2003. It is to be

noted that some concepts and definitions relevant to international migration are also relevant to other statistical areas, such as international trade in services involving natural persons, as well as balance of payment and tourism statistics.

7. The Division for the Advancement of Women undertakes activities related to the prevention of violence against female migrant workers and trafficking in women and girls. In November 2002, DAW organized the Expert Group Meeting on Trafficking in Women and Girls, which discussed the human rights, criminal justice and gender-based approach to combating such trafficking. During the past two years, it prepared the Secretary-General's reports on violence against women migrant workers (A/56/329) and on trafficking in women and girls (A/57/170). The Division also acts as the Secretariat for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In its consideration of the reports by States parties, the Committee regularly addresses the issues of international migration and trafficking in women and girls. The Division promotes the need of adopting a gender perspective in the formulation of international migration policies, particularly because female migrants are often subject to various forms of discrimination and violence owing to their status as both migrants and women. It is recognized that globalization, by increasing the need for cheap labour, has helped increase the demand for female migrant workers and that restrictive immigration laws and regulations may promote trafficking as a means of satisfying that demand.

8. In July 2002 and in parallel with the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, the Division for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination, another part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, organized a panel discussion on better managing migration for sustainable development, thus providing a forum for consideration of the topic. In addition, the Division for Social Policy and Development is organizing the International Forum for Social Development: International Migrants and Development, to be held in October 2003, and its *Report on the World Social Situation, 2003* will contain a chapter on the social vulnerabilities of migrants.

2. United Nations regional commissions

9. The recognition that regional cooperation can effectively address the challenges posed by international migration and enhance its impact on development has prompted various activities at the regional level. Thus, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) have all expanded their work on international migration issues.

10. At the Economic Commission for Europe, the Statistical Division continues to compile and disseminate international migration statistics for European countries. It compiles statistics on flows of international migrants by using the joint migration questionnaire under the coordination of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Demographic and Migration Statistics. This collaborative strategy for the compilation of official statistics minimizes the burden on national authorities providing the international migration statistics and contributes to improving the international comparability of the data compiled. In addition, the Statistical Division of the Economic Commission for Europe organizes the joint ECE-Eurostat intergovernmental meetings on international migration statistics, which provide a forum where various aspects of the collection, compilation and use of data on

international migration are discussed by national and international experts. The most recent meeting was held in Geneva in April 2000 and it considered, inter alia, the international migration statistics derived from the 2000 round of population censuses, estimates of undocumented migration and estimates of other major categories of migrants.

11. The Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE) of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean continues updating its Research on International Migration in Latin America (IMILA) databank, in collaboration with the Governments in the region. The Centre has also carried out studies on specific aspects of international migration in the context of globalization. Documents generated by these efforts have been presented at various regional meetings, including the Commission's twenty-ninth session in 2002 and the Hemispheric Conference on International Migration: Human Rights and the Trafficking in Persons in the Americas held in Chile in 2002. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has also provided technical assistance on diverse aspects of international migration to governmental institutions, civil society organizations and academic institutions in the region. Although the Commission is aware that there is increasing participation on the part of civil society and international agencies in cooperation mechanisms, it considers that more efforts are necessary to harmonize policies and national laws and to promote the ratification of international instruments on international migration.

12. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific organized in 2001 an ad hoc Expert Group Meeting on Migration and Development: Opportunities and Challenges for Poverty Reduction in the Asian and Pacific region, as a preparatory activity for the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference held in 2002. The Conference noted that there is considerable diversity in international migration flows within the Asian and Pacific region. Refugees and asylum-seekers are among the types of migrants whose numbers have increased in the region and, together with unauthorized labour migrants and women and children who are victims of trafficking, they pose special challenges. The Plan of Action adopted at the Conference urged Governments, in cooperation with civil society organizations and the international community, to address the issues of international migration and to maximize its benefits while mitigating its adverse effects. In October 2002, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific convened a seminar on promoting gender equality to combat trafficking in women and children. Later in 2003 it will convene an ad hoc Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development, the major objective of which will be to understand the linkages between internal and international migration and development, with particular emphasis on gender, poverty and health.

B. Other bodies of the United Nations system

1. United Nations Children's Fund

13. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) extends its assistance primarily to minors and women who are refugees or the victims of trafficking. It works with its government partners, parliamentarians and civil society to support the development of legislation, including bilateral and regional agreements, for the protection of child victims of trafficking. Most recently, the Fund's efforts in

partnership with the Stability Pact Task Force have resulted in guidelines for the provision of services to child victims of trafficking in South-Eastern Europe. The Fund's outreach programmes at the community level provide information about the risks of trafficking to adolescents considering employment opportunities abroad. For example, in Western and Central Africa, advocacy campaigns raise awareness among communities and in schools. In South-Eastern Europe, hotlines have been established to enable individuals to report suspicious employment agencies or a missing family member. Capacity-building programmes in East Asia enable non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, as well as law enforcement and health personnel, to ensure that systems exist to respond to the needs of child victims.

2. United Nations Development Fund for Women

14. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has organized several round tables on international migration involving key stakeholders and emphasizing a gender and rights-based perspective. It has also set up a network of institutions working on issues related to the labour migration of women. During 2001-2003, as part of its Regional Programme on Empowering Women Migrant Workers in Asia, the Fund worked towards the development of policy, as well as the creation of an enabling institutional and socio-economic environment that ensures women's equality of opportunity and equal access to resources and benefits at all stages of the international migration process. In Latin America, the Fund supports building an information base on the migration of women, its causes and consequences.

15. The United Nations Development Fund for Women has successfully promoted better employment standards for female migrants. For instance, as a result of advocacy by the Fund, the Ministry of Labour of Jordan endorsed in 2003 a special work contract for non-Jordanian domestic workers, providing them with a list of social rights. In the Philippines, the Fund in partnership with an NGO for migrant workers has developed a pilot savings and investment scheme for female migrants, including returnees. This initiative seeks to channel the productive contribution of migrants not only to their families but also to the communities of origin.

3. United Nations Development Programme

16. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has approached international migration from two different perspectives. First, it has conducted research focusing on the relationship between the brain drain and capacity development. Second, it has carried out TOKTEN (Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals), a programme to help qualified expatriates return to their countries of origin to work on specific projects. This programme aims at promoting the social and economic advancement of developing countries through the transfer of expatriates' expertise.

17. The TOKTEN programme has proved that skilled expatriates can be an asset to their countries of origin and that the transfer of knowledge occurs at lower cost and more rapidly when expatriates are involved. Such programmes are more successful when they are supported by an active transnational community. The utilization of the emigrants' expertise through migrant networks should be an added dimension of technical cooperation.

4. United Nations Institute for Training and Research

18. Participation in the International Migration Policy Programme (IMP) is a key activity of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in the field of international migration and development. The Programme is an inter-agency programme bringing together the Institute, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Its aim is to strengthen the capacity of Governments to manage international migration and to facilitate regional and international cooperation aimed at promoting orderly international migration and the protection of international migrants. Its efforts have been especially targeted towards strengthening the capacity of senior government officials in developing countries to address the issues posed by international migration and forced displacement and to foster a constructive dialogue among States. Since 2001, the International Migration Policy Programme has organized seven major regional meetings and co-organized seminars on human trafficking in South-Eastern Europe. These activities have benefited more than 400 senior and middle-level government officials from some 56 countries.

19. The Programme's activities attest to the critical importance of fostering dialogue among senior government officials involved in the management of international migration, so that they can identify common interests and priorities. Best results have been achieved when the activity was aimed at confidence-building and was open and transparent; when government delegations represented the ministries dealing with international migration and forced displacement; when there was gender balance in the delegations; when follow-up programmes were planned; and when concrete progress was measured through the Programme's country reporting system.

5. United Nations Population Fund

20. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) participates in the International Migration Policy Programme and works towards strengthening national capacity to manage international migration. Through its regional programme, UNFPA provides funds for policy-oriented studies on international migration. Thus, it supported the Hemispheric Conference convened by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the International Organization for Migration in Chile in November 2002. The Conference aimed at strengthening cooperation among Governments in identifying mechanisms for protecting and promoting the human rights of migrants and for combating and preventing the trafficking in persons. The Fund's activities have indicated that issues of sexual and reproductive health should be considered in relation to international migration; that the linkages of migration with HIV/AIDS had to be addressed by policy-oriented research and advocacy; and that there continued to be a need to understand better the role of migrant remittances in family formation, levels and trends of fertility, intergenerational transfers and internal migration.

6. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

21. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has been actively involved in issues of population mobility and HIV/AIDS by supporting advocacy, policy guidance and definition of best practices at the global level. Thus,

the Programme carries out baseline assessments of HIV-related risks associated with migration and coordinates research in the area of HIV/AIDS and migration. In collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, it has contributed to increasing the understanding and recognition of the vulnerability of migrant populations to HIV/AIDS through its publications entitled *Population Mobility and AIDS and Migrants' Right to Health*. Initiatives have also been directed towards assisting Governments and regional institutions to address migration in strategic plans and programmes to combat HIV/AIDS.

22. The linkages between migration and HIV/AIDS are clouded by misinformation, misunderstanding and stigmatization. While many think that migrants are the source of HIV infection, the evidence shows that migrants are more vulnerable to contagion from the local population. The links between mobility and HIV/AIDS are related to the conditions and structure of the migration process. In order to avoid stigmatizing migrants, a pragmatic and rights-based approach is necessary. As in the case of programmes dealing with other vulnerable populations, it is important to involve migrants in programme planning, implementation and evaluation. A positive environment for dealing with HIV/AIDS must be created, where issues such as discrimination and xenophobia are addressed and where international migrants have access to health-care services on the same basis as the local population. It is particularly important to train core groups of experts in the field of HIV/AIDS and international migration and to create centres of expertise at the regional level to provide technical and programme development support, training, research and policy guidance.

7. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

23. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) services the Committee that monitors the implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families,[5] which entered into force on 1 July 2003. It also provides secretarial services for the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants. In the past two years, the Special Rapporteur, who seeks ways to overcome obstacles to the full and effective protection of the human rights of international migrants, has visited Ecuador, the Philippines, Mexico and the border area between Mexico and the United States of America. On the basis of these visits, the Special Rapporteur has concluded that the creation of employment in the country of origin can prevent irregular migration, provided that respect for the rights of workers is also strengthened. By itself, economic aid for development cannot solve the problems associated with unauthorized migration to richer countries. It is of fundamental importance that the States of origin commit to promote the human rights of all their nationals.

24. Trafficking in persons is a crime that entails human rights violations. On this basis, in 2000 OHCHR advocated the formulation of two protocols to supplement the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.[6] In July 2002, the High Commissioner for Human Rights transmitted to the Economic and Social Council the Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking in order to facilitate the integration of human

rights into national, regional and international laws and policies related to trafficking in persons.

8. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

25. In partnership with the Governments of countries of asylum, development actors and bilateral donors, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provides essential services to refugees and promotes the self-reliance of refugee populations in the countries of asylum. It facilitates the return and sustainable reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons to their communities of origin, linking short-term reintegration programmes to long-term reconstruction and development efforts. UNHCR also contributes to poverty reduction efforts among refugees so as to reinforce the protection capacity of countries of asylum and to facilitate the attainment of durable solutions for refugees and other displaced populations.

26. On the basis of these activities, UNHCR emphasizes the continuing need to bridge the gap between short-term humanitarian programmes and longer-term development initiatives, both in countries of asylum and in countries of origin. Efforts must be made to ensure that refugees, returnees and other international migrants can effectively exercise their productive capacities, thereby enabling them to contribute to the development of the countries and communities in which they reside. While recognizing the importance of reducing irregular migration and human smuggling, UNHCR cautions that such objectives must be consistent with the principles of refugee protection and must not prevent people from seeking asylum.

9. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

27. Although the activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) do not focus specifically on international migration, the types of developmental interventions promoted by the Organization are highly relevant to migration. FAO stresses that hunger and food insecurity can act as powerful push factors and contribute to undesirable patterns of international migration. Consequently, the incorporation of food security concerns into the management of international migration should be promoted. Migration also has major implications for the management of the environment and natural resources, for the supply of and demand for agricultural and non-agricultural labour, and for food production in the countries of origin and destination. Examples of agricultural policies that can stabilize rural populations or foster return flows of people include interventions to improve rural livelihoods and the diversification of rural economies. It is also crucial to reduce vulnerability and increase the resilience of farming systems and rural households.

10. International Labour Organization

28. The protection of migrant workers from discrimination and exploitation through the formulation of international standards for the treatment of international migrant workers has been a key activity of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Two of its conventions on international migrants, namely, the Convention concerning Migration for Employment (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), and the Convention concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment for Migrant Workers, 1975 (No. 143), are in

force. In addition, the Organization has adopted a number of labour standards that apply equally to foreign and national workers.

29. Since 2001, ILO has carried out a number of studies on international migration at the regional and interregional levels. These include a comparative study on the international migration of the highly skilled and its impact on countries of origin and destination; the situation of migrants in irregular employment in Mediterranean countries of the European Union; international migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to and across Morocco; and the situation of migrant workers in Central America and the Andean countries. In addition, ILO organized regional seminars in Africa and Asia to enhance the capacity of its constituents to formulate and enforce labour migration policy.

30. The studies carried out by ILO found that programmes to facilitate the spontaneous return and circulation of skilled migrants were more sustainable and cost-effective than those to promote their permanent return to the countries of origin. Therefore, ILO stresses the importance of formulating migration policies conducive to the circulation and readmission of international migrants. Countries of destination can help reduce the loss of highly skilled workers from countries of origin by supervising recruitment, engaging in bilateral labour agreements, encouraging investment in the countries of origin, becoming parties to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), and orienting their aid and technical assistance to support education and training in the communities of origin. Countries of origin need to promote economic growth and economic diversification so as to create rewarding working opportunities at home. It is also important for them to eliminate institutional barriers that make the labour market inflexible to the demand for skills and to establish links with nationals abroad.

31. The effective protection of migrant workers can best be achieved by empowering the migrants themselves through information and training. Countries of origin should develop systems to supervise the recruitment of their workers and train specialized civil servants for that task. They can also extend social insurance to international migrants, allow them access to social and health services and monitor their living conditions while abroad. Lastly, countries of origin need to formulate and adopt policies and regulations to combat trafficking, while ensuring respect for the rights of victims.

C. Organizations outside the United Nations system

1. International Organization for Migration

32. As an increasing number of developing countries have joined the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the issue of international migration and development has gained prominence on its agenda. IOM holds the view that international migration, if managed effectively, can contribute to the growth and prosperity of both countries of origin and those of destination. Migrants are considered as potential agents of development and a means to strengthen cooperation between the home and the host society.

33. The Organization's approach to the issue follows three major orientations; (1) targeted research and policy dialogue; (2) the facilitation of labour migration, and (3) the realization of the potential benefits of transnational communities. In order to

raise awareness about the relevance of international migration to development, IOM has organized conferences and workshops and has carried out research on international migration dynamics in developing countries. To take advantage of the significant contribution that migrants abroad can make to poverty alleviation and economic development in countries of origin, IOM has implemented over 40 projects since 1999. Some of them have fostered the transfer of migrants' skills. Others have provided direct assistance to microenterprises and small enterprises established by returnees.

34. IOM considers that carefully targeted research is crucial in identifying effective modes of intervention. In addition, effective coordination and partnerships need to be promoted and strengthened among international organizations and NGOs working in the field of international migration. Dialogue between countries of origin and destination has proven to be an effective means of exploring innovative approaches to the management of international migration for the benefit of all parties concerned. The Organization's projects prove yet again that labour migration is crucial for the livelihood of many families. Its pre-departure orientation programmes contribute significantly to the well-being of migrants at destination. As for the utilization of transnational communities, it has been found that strategies for the involvement of international migrants in the development of communities of origin is feasible and should be extended. Migrants are highly interested in participating in such projects, provided that the opportunities offered are credible, that the proactive participation of the Government of the country of origin is ensured, and that the jobs held by migrants in the country of destination are secure.

2. European Union

35. Following the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, which established for the first time Community competence on immigration and asylum, the European Union (EU), at its meeting in Tampere in October 1999, called for a common policy on immigration and asylum and set forth a framework to achieve it. This framework involved partnerships with countries of origin; a common European Asylum System; the fair treatment of third country nationals; and the management of international migration flows. In accordance with these principles, the Commission has taken various initiatives designed to lead to a gradual convergence of policy objectives and the Union's legislative programme reflects a regional approach to international migration.

36. The key elements set out in Tampere, in particular, ensuring a comprehensive and balanced approach and pursuing partnerships with third countries, are seen as essential cornerstones for the success of migration management. Hence, the European Council, at its meeting of June 2002, stressed the need to integrate further immigration policy into the Union's relations with third countries, making use of all appropriate EU external relations instruments. In December 2002, the European Commission adopted a Communication on Integrating Migration Issues in the European Union's Relations with Third Countries. Part one of this Communication deals explicitly with the link between international migration and development, assessing the effects of international migration on developing countries. The Commission is also of the view that no international migration policy will be successful unless it is accompanied by a comprehensive integration strategy for international migrants admitted by member States.

3. Metropolis

37. The International Metropolis Project is a multinational partnership with members representing national policy interests, academic and other research organizations, non-governmental organizations and international organizations, whose goal is to enhance policy-making and other decision-making processes relative to international migration. To that end, the Metropolis project convenes numerous international conferences, seminars, closed-door policy discussions, and expert round tables on specific migration issues. The project has mostly concentrated on the integration of immigrants into their host societies. However, over the years it has greatly expanded its scope to include demographic trends, international migration flows, the smuggling and trafficking of migrants, international cooperation in the management of international migration, the abuse of the international asylum system and the extent and effects of the brain drain on countries of origin. Recently, the Metropolis project has focused on international migration and development, specifically on whether international migration can be managed in such a way as to confer social, economic and political benefits to countries of origin in the developing world.

4. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

38. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), with 55 participating States from Europe, Central Asia and North America, carries out activities related to early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. Activities in the field of international migration are concentrated on three major thematic areas, targeting primarily the newly independent States of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. First, OSCE provides border services, as well as training for border service officers. Second, it organizes workshops to exchange information on international migration, addressing the responsibilities and coordination of activities among various government agencies involved in the management of international migration. Third, it helps establish population registration systems operating under the principle of freedom of movement and choice of place of residence, which the OSCE considers a prerequisite for a transition to democracy.

5. Society for International Development

39. The Netherlands Chapter of the Society for International Development (SID) started in 1999 a three-year multidisciplinary project called the Future of Asylum and Migration. The project consisted of a series of thematic seminars involving some 50 participants each, and a Special Hearing in 2001 attended by 190 experts. In November 2002, the project produced the Declaration of The Hague which was presented to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. As stated in the Declaration, the project reaffirmed that economic disparities between and within countries are one of the major causes of international migration. Migration policy therefore must be seen as an integral part of policies to promote development, combat disease and eradicate poverty and illiteracy. A greater commitment is required to formulate comprehensive development strategies that are sustainable, people-centred and include an emphasis on education, health and political participation and that mitigate the negative effects of the brain drain.

III. Possible mechanisms to address the issues of international migration and development within the United Nations system

A. Views of Governments regarding the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development

40. A United Nations conference on international migration and development has been considered as a possible forum to address the complex issues involved in maximizing the benefits that international migration can have for development. The Population Division of the United Nations Secretariat has solicited the views of Governments regarding the possibility of convening such a conference through letters sent to all States Members of the United Nations. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/127 of 19 December 1994, the first letter to seek the views of Governments about the objectives and modalities for the convening of such a conference was sent in February 1995. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/123 of 20 December 1995, a second letter was sent in April 1997 to obtain additional views of Governments on the proposed conference. In March 1999, as requested by General Assembly resolution 52/189 of 18 December 1997, a third letter was sent to all Governments, inviting especially those who had not responded yet to the letters sent in 1995 and 1997 to express their views. The most recent summary of the views elicited by the previous three inquiries was presented in the report of the Secretary-General on international migration and development (A/56/167). The responses received between 1995 and 1999 reflected the views of 41 per cent of all Member States and there were diverging views among those responding. Therefore, no conclusion could be drawn regarding the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development.

41. In 2002, the General Assembly, through resolution 56/203 of 21 February 2002, requested the Secretary-General to solicit, one additional time, the views of Member States in pursuance of resolution 52/189. Consequently, in early March 2003, a letter was sent to all Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, inviting them to express the latest views of their Governments on the proposed conference by 15 April 2003. In late April, the Permanent Representatives who had not yet responded were contacted and informed that a reply was needed as soon as possible in order to ensure that the results of the survey would provide a comprehensive assessment of the views of Member States.

42. By early July 2003, responses had been received from the following 46 member States: Armenia, Australia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Czech Republic, Congo, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Estonia, Gambia, Greece (on behalf of the 15 States members of the EU), Guyana, Indonesia, Japan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, the Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Russian Federation, Sudan, Switzerland and Tunisia. A non-member State, the Holy See, also replied. Hence, the number of Governments responding to the most recent inquiry represent 24 per cent of all United Nations Member States. Given the high level of non-response, it was again not possible to reach a conclusion about whether a United Nations conference on international migration and development should be convened. Furthermore, the views expressed by the 47 Governments who responded were diverse, with 25 Member States favouring the convening of a conference and 22 expressing reservations about the proposal.

43. Among the 25 Governments that favoured holding a United Nations conference, the majority considered that it should be of a technical and analytical nature. It was envisaged that the proposed conference would debate major issues concerning international migration and development and deepen the theoretical and empirical knowledge by discussing the trends, causes and consequences of international migration in relation to development. A few countries were of the opinion that the conference could provide a forum for dialogue among concerned Governments, strengthen cooperation between countries of origin and of destination, and eventually establish a system of collaboration to help maximize the benefits of international migration. Some Governments suggested that the conference could undertake negotiations on specific issues.

44. International movements of people take a variety of forms. Hence, the majority of the Governments suggested that all types of international migrants be considered in the proposed conference. Several Governments indicated that special attention should be given to migrant workers and migrants in an irregular situation.

45. The most frequently mentioned outcome of the conference would be the adoption of recommendations or principles, especially relative to migration policies in countries of origin and destination or with respect to the establishment of an institutional framework to foster cooperation.

46. Several Governments that favoured convening a conference mentioned that it could be held, following a preparatory process at the regional and subregional levels, either in 2004 or 2005, with the proposed duration of the conference ranging from 2 to 10 days. Regarding other logistics of the conference, such as sources of funding needed to organize it or the composition of its secretariat, the views expressed by Governments varied widely.

47. Most of the 22 Governments that did not favour the holding of a conference nevertheless underscored the importance of international migration and development. However, many of them considered that existing mechanisms, such as the Commission on Population and Development or a special session of the General Assembly, could provide appropriate fora for discussion of the issue. Whereas some Governments objected to the idea of convening another international conference in view of the financial constraints of the Organization, one State stressed that a regional approach was more appropriate to address the current needs of States.

B. Other ways and means for the United Nations to address the issues related to international migration and development

48. As reviewed earlier, several bodies in the United Nations system have already played key roles in addressing different issues related to international migration, with varying degrees of relevance to development. While there is still no comprehensive international mechanism to deal with the complex linkages between international migration and development, the growing recognition that international migration is of key relevance to the global agenda has led the international community to take a new look at how the United Nations can support and promote efforts to address existing global migration challenges. This section summarizes the views of Member States and concerned organizations about possible roles of the United Nations in the field of international migration and development.

49. Member States generally consider that the United Nations role in the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on international migration is essential in order to dispel myths about international migration and to guide the formulation of appropriate policy. The United Nations has a comparative advantage in promoting the collection and compilation of compatible statistical and other data relating to international migration and development. It is also well placed to conduct comprehensive and objective analyses of international migration dynamics and their interrelations with development processes. Its research could focus on the causes, patterns and trends of international migration, the impact of migrant remittances, the interactions of migrants abroad with the communities of origin, the creation and maintenance of transnational populations and the trade and development implications of international migration for countries of origin and destination.

50. United Nations leadership is crucial to creating the conditions under which partnerships in this field can be forged and maintained and in which policy issues that go beyond narrow national interests can be addressed. Enhanced cooperation and coordination between the United Nations agencies, bodies, funds and other international organizations that are active in the area of international migration should be expected. The exchange of experiences and best practices should be actively promoted and facilitated among all concerned institutional actors.

51. It is also expected that the United Nations would contribute further to addressing the issue of international migration and development through the provision of advisory services and technical assistance. The United Nations can assist Governments in developing policy, ensuring a rights-based approach to policy-making, drafting legislation on international migration and migrants, and developing strategies whereby international migration considerations become an integral part of development planning. Technical assistance can also be extended to countries that need to strengthen national capacity to monitor, evaluate and manage international migration flows.

52. The evidence provided by a number of activities already under way indicates that providing a venue for dialogue between interested parties can help in generating trust and fostering the cooperation necessary for the management of international migration. The United Nations is well placed to promote such dialogue through consultative forums addressing the different but interrelated aspects of international migration and development. Such dialogue can involve not only States, but also relevant regional and international organizations, development and financial institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations.

53. Lastly, there must be stronger efforts by the United Nations to increase awareness of the rights of international migrants and the importance of effective integration of international migrants into the host society. To this end, the United Nations should promote a wider ratification of existing international instruments related to international migration. These include the two ILO conventions on treatment of migrant workers, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the two Protocols supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

IV. Conclusions

54. Over the past years, a wide range of activities relating to international migration and development have been carried out by relevant bodies, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as by other organizations that work at the international level. The lessons learned and best practices regarding the management of international migration, as well as the policy guidance emanating from them, have helped to address some of the consequences that international migration has for development and to clarify aspects of the migration and development nexus that provide insights into ways of maximizing the development benefits of international migration.

55. The present report has examined the actual and potential mechanisms available within the United Nations system for addressing the issues related to international migration and development. While the possibility of convening a United Nations conference on the theme remains uncertain, the expectation that the United Nations should address this global challenge in a comprehensive manner has grown. Areas in which the organization is expected to play a key role include data collection, research, coordination of activities among concerned organizations, the provision of advisory services and technical assistance, advocacy, and the promotion of the ratification of existing international instruments related to international migration.

Notes

[1] ESA/P/WP.176.

[2] ST/ESA/SER.A/218.

[3] ST/ESA/SER.A/220. United Nations publication, Sales No. 03.XIII.4.

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.14.

[5] Adopted by the General Assembly through resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990.

[6] Adopted by the General Assembly through resolution 55/25 of 15 November 2000.